COMMAND AND CONTROL OF THEATER AIRLIFT

GRADUATE RESEARCH PAPER

Donald J. Kochanski, Major, USAF

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Donald J. Kochanski, B.S., M.B.A.

Major, USAF

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Abstract

Since the late 1950s leaders in the US Air Force have debated whether theater airlift, specifically C-130 aircraft, would be most effectively controlled by a Theater Commander or by the commander of the Air Force's "airlift command." This paper reviews the history of theater airlift command and control and attempts to determine how the Air Force might reorganize to control theater airlift as efficiently and effectively as possible. It examines whether sweeping changes in Air Force command structure initiated in the early 1990s improved or degraded theater airlift operations. It addresses operations in both the Pacific and European theaters. This study finds that the most drastic and lasting improvements to airlift operations effectiveness can be achieved if the method of airlift management is changed to the "single commander" concept. The practical application of this method would be that all aircraft in the same area whether on a theater or strategic airlift mission would be controlled by the same commander. That commander could be the Theater Commander or the AMC Commander; either could effectively and efficiently control theater airlift if allowed to control ALL airlift aircraft flying missions in the overseas theaters. The findings suggest that it is in the best interest of the Air Force and DoD to employ the single commander concept to provide command and control of theater airlift.

Command and Control of Theater Airlift

I. Introduction

Background

The C-130 is an airlift aircraft capable of carrying six pallets of cargo or 64 paratroopers for airdrop. It has a range of approximately 3000 miles and can reach speeds of up to 300 mph. Various models of the C-130 have been in the US Air Force inventory since the late nineteen fifties. Its main use has been to supply ground forces in close proximity to the front during wartime and to haul cargo over fairly short distances during peacetime.

Because the C-130 is capable of landing on short, unimproved landing strips (theater missions) and hauling cargo from one destination to another (strategic missions), Air Force leaders have questioned who should provide command and control for C-130 missions. Some argue that the Theater Commander, who runs the air war and who owns the airspace in the theater, is better suited to provide command and control for C-130s because the commander is physically located in the theater. Others argue that because the C-130 as an essential part of the airlift force, the Commander of the Air Mobility Command (AMC) should provide command and control for C-130s. AMC control would eliminate possible breaks in communication and ensure mission continuity from the strategic through the theater portion of each airlift mission.

According to Air Force Doctrine Document 30, the C-130 is a tactical airlift aircraft with theater airlift as its primary mission. Although the mission of the C-130 has remained constant since the late fifties, command and control has shifted from the Theater Commander to the Airlift Commander and back again to the Theater Commander. In the early nineteen sixties, crews from the Pacific Air Forces (PACAF) and the United States Air Forces Europe (USAFE) owned and operated the overseas C-130s. Due to airlift command and control problems during the Vietnam War, command and control of the aircraft and crews transferred to the Military Airlift Command (MAC) in the mid nineteen seventies. In 1992 the Air Force restructured following the Cold War. PACAF and USAFE regained control of C-130 aircraft and crews during this restructure. About the time the Theater Commands regained control of the C-130s, the Air Force dissolved the Military Airlift Command. MAC's strategic airlift assets joined most of the Strategic Air Command's (SAC's) refueling assets to form the Air Mobility Command (AMC). The Air Force transferred the C-130s in the United States to the Air Combat Command (ACC) in 1993 and back to the Air Mobility Command in April of 1997.

The airlift system within the Air Force consists of strategic and theater airlift. Strategic airlift carries personnel and cargo from the US to the overseas theaters. Once in the theater, theater airlift distributes personnel and cargo to more specific destinations. Normally, large cargo aircraft fly the strategic airlift

missions and C-130s fly the theater missions. AMC, PACAF, and USAFE currently control C-130 aircraft and crews. AMC controls all strategic airlift assets and does not normally transfer control to the theater commander when its aircraft operate in the overseas theaters. In each overseas theater, these units conduct command and control of strategic and theater airlift (overseas C-130s) separately. This separation of control of airlift makes up the multiple airlift management system the Air Force currently employs.

Rationale

As defense budgets shrink and the number of US troops stationed overseas decreases, airlift becomes increasingly important to respond to world crises. US war fighting strategy has gone from a prepositioned force ready to defend Europe to a flexible response force relying on airlift to move US based troops and equipment to a battle area. The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff stressed the importance of a global mobility system for future conflicts: "If we do not build a transportation system that can meet our needs tomorrow then it doesn't matter much what kind of force we have because we won't be able to get it there" (USTRANSCOM Pamphlet 35-1, 1995:1).

As the number of aircraft available for airlift decreases, the Air Force must find better, more efficient ways to employ its remaining airlift assets to make this flexible response strategy possible. According to Major Len Murin of the Air

Force Doctrine Center, "there are NEVER enough Air Mobility assets to meet requirements" (Major Len Murin: 1996).

General Issue

Is the current multiple manager airlift system the most efficient and effective way to control theater airlift? This paper suggests that the separation of control of theater and strategic airlift has resulted in theater command and control inadequacies, duplication of personnel and equipment necessary to provide airlift command and control, maintenance repair problems, scheduling problems, unused capacity problems, and potential overlapping control problems. Using the multiple manager airlift system, the strategic airlift flow does not efficiently mesh with the corresponding theater airlift flow. This system causes a noticeable seam between these two portions of the airlift mission that leads to the problems listed above. Is the single manager airlift concept better than the multiple manager airlift command and control system or is there some comprise between the two systems? An organizational structure that allows the Theater Commander to control the theater assigned C-130s and the AMC Commander to control strategic airlift aircraft through the same command and control system may be the best solution.

This paper discusses problems with the current multiple manager airlift system, explains the single manager airlift system, and provides options that will

help solve the current theater airlift command and control problems in the overseas theaters.

Overview of Subsequent Chapters

Chapter II includes a review of the relevant literature concerning airlift command and control issues from before the Vietnam War to the present. It focuses on the organization of command and control during the Vietnam War and since that time.

Chapter III is a description of airlift command and control problem components. This chapter details the reasons for a major Air Force restructure in the early 1990s. It summarizes the effects of the restructure on airlift command and control.

Chapter IV includes suggested changes in command and control methods to maximize airlift efficiency. It reviews the expectations and probabilities for implementation.

II. Historical Review

Pre-Vietnam Years

The Department of Defense (DoD) realized the potential for inefficient use of cargo aircraft if operated from separate agencies or services as early as 1948. Jeffrey Underwood, in his task paper on airlift history, states: "In 1948, the DoD, over the Navy's objections, combined the assets of the USAF's Air Transport Command and the Navy's Air Transport Service into a single organization, the Military Air Transport Service (MATS), under the direction of the United States Air Force Chief of Staff" (Underwood, 1989:1). The DoD realized that certain efficiencies could be gained by consolidating airlift into one organization.

Although directed by the DoD to consolidate transport aircraft into a single organization, the Air Force did not do this. It determined that troop carriers (theater airlift aircraft) did not fit into the air transport category and were not subject to the stated DoD directive. The Air Force argued that the theater commander should control theater airlift because it generally operated exclusively within the theater. Thus, the Air Force decided the multiple manager airlift system was appropriate in 1948 due to the distinction between strategic and theater airlift missions.

However, as early as 1950 the distinction Air Force leaders made between tactical and strategic airlift began to blur. "After exercises conducted in 1950

showed that the two forces (strategic and tactical airlift) could be successfully combined, the Air Force considered placing them under a single command. However, opposition from the Army and within the Air Force prevented this merger" (Underwood, 1989: 2). The Tactical Air Command (TAC), which owned the tactical airlift assets in the US, opposed the consolidation of strategic and tactical airlift into one consolidated airlift command. The leaders of TAC believed that it was more important to control theater airlift from the same location as the air war than to control it from the location that controlled strategic airlift. They believed that tactical airlift was an essential part of the theater war effort. Opposing the Tactical Air Command in the fight for consolidation was Lt Gen William H. Tunner. General Tunner argued that theater airlift should be controlled from the same location and by the same commander as the strategic flow.

Lt Gen Tunner laid the foundation for airlift concepts for the USAF, both strategic and tactical. As commander of the Hump operation during World War II in China, the Berlin Airlift, and the Military Air Transportation Service (MATS), he was a true pioneer of airlift. In his book Over The Hump, General Tunner discusses intratheater airlift command and control issues for war and peacetime operations in-depth. He believes airlift encompassed a complete system of delivering people and cargo where and when they were needed, regardless of the airframe used to get them there. He argued that controlling strategic and theater

airlift from two different commands led to inefficiencies the US could not afford. From the beginning, he was an advocate of consolidating all airlift aircraft under one command. He argues that cargo planes are enormously expensive and to have less than absolute efficiency in the way they are administered and controlled is costly. He states: "This enormous figure allocated to the development and manufacture of just one type of aircraft should underscore dramatically a point I have been attempting to make through this book: the growing necessity to consolidate all military cargo planes under one command" (Tunner, 1964:320). General Tunner states that consolidating all airlift into one command would eliminate the redundancies in command and control that exist under the multiple manager airlift system.

As early as 1963 Secretary of Defense McNamara testified to Congress about the changing nature of strategic and tactical airlift:

> Indeed, the C-141 may open up entirely new vistas in troop carrier operations. For example, it might prove to be entirely feasible to load troops and their equipment in the United States and fly them directly to the battle area overseas, instead of moving them by strategic airlift to an overseas assembly point and then loading them and their equipment on troop carriers. Thus, the line of demarcation between the strategic mission and the troop carrier or assault mission may, in time, become less important. This type of operation might require certain improvements in global communications and control and also possibly some changes in organization. (Miller, 1988:284)

Secretary McNamara suggested that as airlift aircraft evolve and strategic and theater airlift missions overlap, the separate command and control systems that

control each type of aircraft may have to overlap or even be combined to accommodate them.

Vietnam Years

During the Vietnam War, the Theater Commander controlled theater airlift while strategic airlift remained under the control of the Military Airlift Command. Two separate command and control systems controlled airlift throughout the war. When operating two separate command and control systems for airlift, the entire airlift effort is only as strong as the weakest system. During the Vietnam War, the airlift system suffered because the PACAF system had difficulty keeping up with the heavy workload. According to the AMC Historian Jay Smith, "The [Vietnam] war severely strained the Pacific Air Forces' ability to operate an intratheater airlift system while also meeting tactical airlift requirements in South Vietnam" (Smith, 1991:131). Smith further states that if the two command and control systems had been combined the airlift system would have had less conflict and been more efficient:

> One of the central issues that arose from the Vietnam Conflict was command and control over airlift resources. The strategic airlift force, under the direct authority of the Military Airlift Command but supporting the theater command, worked closely with the tactical airlift force, which was the responsibility of the theater. The result was the establishment of two airlift structures--one supporting the strategic flow and the other more localized. These two systems were sometimes conflicting and all too often inefficient. (Smith, 1991: 145)

As a result of these inefficiencies, conflicts, and workload of each control system the Air Force looked more closely at airlift doctrine during the later years of the Vietnam War. Experienced airlift officers conducted a study called Corona Harvest at Maxwell AFB in 1970:

> In 1970, Colonel Louis P. Lindsey, an experienced tactical airlift officer, chaired an Air University committee. The Lindsey committee's report stated that the separate tactical and strategic airlift management organizations had duplicated command, aerial port, and support elements in Southeast Asia. Unanimously, the committee recommended that steps be taken to achieve a single airlift command as soon as possible. (Underwood, 1989: 6)

However, one of the arguments against consolidation of strategic and tactical airlift into one command and control center was that it would hamper the Theater Commander's ability to execute the battle plan. This argument assumed that the airlift commander, not the Theater Commander, would control the one command and control center for airlift. If the Theater Commander controlled theater airlift, as well as strategic airlift that flew in the theater, it would enhance his ability to execute the battle plan. At that time, the Air Force did not consider placing all airlift that flew in the theater under the control of the Theater Commander. One command and control system that reported to the Theater Commander would eliminate the seam between strategic and theater airlift and keep all airlift operations in tune with the theater war.

Because the Air Force did not consider consolidating all airlift under the Theater Commander, General William W. Momyer, commander of the Tactical

Air Command (TAC), opposed consolidation of theater and strategic airlift into one airlift command. He believed "that placing the tactical transport aircraft from the overseas commands and TAC with the strategic airlift units would diminish the (tactical) orientation of the force" (Underwood, 1989: 6). General Momyer believed consolidation would be a great mistake:

> It would indeed be a grievous error to create a single airlift force. All of the experience and facts which have emerged from the Vietnam War again point up the validity of the separate entities of strategic and tactical airlift. Theater war demands the assignment of tactical forces which have been designed, nurtured and led by commands devoted to this highly specialized form of warfare. (Miller, 1988:348)

General Momyer's argument is based on the fact that strategic airlift aircraft do not take part in theater warfare. Today, with aircraft like the C-17 and C-141, strategic airlift aircraft often play an integral part of any theater tactical airlift operation. Using General Momyer's rationale, one could argue for consolidation of all airlift aircraft, strategic and theater, under the war fighting commander.

Although General Momyer believed strongly about the Theater Commander's control of theater airlift, the call for consolidation into an airlift command continued. In his thesis, Theater Airlift Management and Control: Should We Turn Back the Clock to Be Ready for Tomorrow?, Lt Col Richard T. Devereaux provides insight and research into theater airlift from the Vietnam War era until 1994. Colonel Devereaux states that one of the most important lessons learned during the Vietnam War is the need for single airlift command. He cites

the Corona Harvest report: "the most important lesson learned was that airlift resources must be controlled from one central point" (Devereaux, 1994: 9). The Corona Harvest report had a major impact on the Air Force leadership and was the catalyst for the consolidation of all airlift aircraft into the Military Airlift Command. This report concluded that separate command and control systems for strategic and theater airlift aircraft caused a noticeable seam that led to inefficiencies and increased costs.

Colonel Charles E. Miller, in his book Airlift Doctrine, applauded the move to consolidate all airlift into a single command:

> Ultimately, the Vietnam era illustrated that tactical and strategic airlift forces should be consolidated into one force, which officially occurred in 1976. Two kinds of efficiency supported their decision. More important was the point, argued for 20-odd years, that by putting the two forces under one organization there would be a synergistic effect that would yield more airlift responsiveness than the simple sum of the other two capabilities. The other, a peacetime economies argument, said that dollars and manpower would be saved. (Miller, 1988: 422)

Post-Vietnam Years

From 1976 until 1991, the Military Airlift Command employed the single manager concept for all airlift from four major control centers. MAC divided the world into four regions or Air Divisions with command centers on the east and west coasts of the US, one in Europe, and one in the Pacific. As aircraft flew missions around the world, they reported to the appropriate command center. This command and control system suffered no obvious seams between strategic

and tactical (theater) airlift. The same agency controlled all airlift aircraft in any given region. All theater airlift was on the same "sheet of music," minimizing difficulties connecting strategic missions with their theater counterparts.

Need for Change

Although the single manager concept for controlling airlift eliminated the seam between strategic and theater airlift, General McPeak, USAF Chief of Staff from 1990 to 1994, argued it was too confusing during wartime. According Lt Col Chris J. Krisinger, in his article "Towards a Seamless Mobility System: The C-130 and Air Force Reorganization," General McPeak also cited a blurred distinction between strategic and tactical missions as the reason for placing the C-130s under the theater commander. General McPeak believed the blurred distinction led to confusion that kept the airlift effort separate from the war fighting effort (Krisinger, 1995:31).

Even though it required more people and resources to have the theater commander control theater airlift, General McPeak believed it was necessary to consolidate all theater aircraft under one commander. According to AFM 1-1, "Aerospace power is most effective when it is focused in purpose and not needlessly dispersed" (AFM 1-1, 1992: 8). General McPeak considered C-130 operations integral to achieving aerospace power but stopped short of including strategic airlift aircraft that flew in the theater. This duplication of effort and

expense would not have occurred if the Theater Commander's command and control system controlled all airlift aircraft that flew in the theater.

In 1991 following the Cold War, the Air Force restructured to meet the needs of the post Cold War threats with a smaller, more streamlined force:

> Air Force leaders Secretary of the Air Force Donald Rice and Air Force Chief of Staff General Merrill A. McPeak, based their decisions on achieving five main themes: strengthen command and control; decentralize; consolidate resources under a single field commander; streamline and flatten organizational structures; and clarify functional responsibilities. (Kennedy, 1993:31)

In an attempt to streamline and flatten organizational structures and clarify functional responsibilities, the Air Force doubled the required command and control centers in the overseas theaters. Additionally, the overseas theaters were slow to provide adequate command and control for theater airlift, even though the Air Force had dedicated more people and resources towards controlling airlift. Thus, instead of doing more with less, the Air Force did less with more. It created a seam between strategic and tactical airlift and did not provide adequate command and control to effectively work around the seam.

Not all Air Force leaders agreed with General McPeak on the subject of who should provide command and control of theater airlift. Lt Col Krisinger cites General H.T. Johnson, former CINCMAC, on the dispersal of C-130s: "the dispersal of those forces will greatly complicate the AMC and USTRANSCOM effort and significantly decrease the overall airlift capabilities of our nation"

(Krisinger, 1995: 31). Thus, the Air Force complicated the command and control process over the objections of its most senior airlift commander.

In his article, "The Airlift System: A Primer," Lt Col Robert C. Owen defines the tenets that the Army Air Corps established in the 1930s when it began establishing permanent airlift units. The Army Air Corps established the following as airlift tenets:

> 1. The central tenet of airlift policy is that the commercial airline fleet is the heart of the national airlift fleet. 2. The role of the military component of the airlift fleet is to do what commercial transport aircraft or civilian aircrews cannot or will not do. 3. The military component should be equipped with aircraft specifically designed for its role. 4. The fourth tenet of airlift policy is that airlift operations represent a continuum that should be under the operational and administrative direction of a single command. (Owen, 1995:25)

Colonel Owen states that these tenets are as true today as they were over fifty years ago and that the transfer of the C-130s to the theater commanders demonstrates a disregard for the fourth tenet.

This brief historical review highlights the opposing views concerning theater airlift command and control. It demonstrates that the multiple manager airlift concept did not function efficiently or effectively during the Vietnam War. It shows that lessons learned from the Vietnam War inspired the single manager concept that MAC employed in the mid seventies. It discussed the single manager airlift system. Finally, this section discussed why the Air Force returned to the multiple manager concept.

III. Problem Components

Theater Command and Control Inadequacies

When the Air Divisions left the overseas theaters, a vital link in the airlift chain-of-command disappeared. In his book Command and Control of Theater Forces: Adequacy, John Cushman concludes that theater forces' command and control systems are "seriously inadequate" (Cushman, 1985: 255). He also states that "those operational commanders charged with mission performance responsibility, down to the corps and tactical air force level, seriously lack the means either to influence the command and control resources they receive or to make the best use of the resources provided" (Cushman, 1985: xiii). Others are concerned that the Theater Commander may not be the most logical person to control theater airlift. According to Colonel Devereaux, the multiple manager airlift system has come at a considerable cost: "Primarily concerned with his air campaign, the Joint Forces Air Component Commander (JFACC) [Theater Commander] may simply lack time and resources to plan and control an airlift effort principally supporting surface forces" (Devereaux, 1994: 56). From 1992 until the present, the theater commanders have not had the necessary equipment and manpower devoted to controlling airlift. This lack of ability has driven the overseas theaters to search for ways to fill the void that the elimination of the Air Divisions created.

Both overseas theaters lack a viable twenty-four hour command and control center that has directive authority to control theater assigned airlift aircraft. Currently, theater assigned airlift aircraft are under the control of Air Operations Squadrons (AOSs) which employ staff officers to provide airlift oversight. These officers work a normal duty day on the staff and then provide "coverage" using a cellular phone during the non-duty hours. Most of the individuals providing oversight are captains or majors with airlift experience. However, in most cases, these officers on the staff are airlift schedulers and do not have directive authority. They become involved in airlift command and control when missions deviate from the original schedule. The theater command post system, which provides twenty-four hour flight following, looks to these officers for guidance. However, lacking directive authority, these staff officers have a difficult time providing that guidance during non-duty hours.

To correct this problem, USAFE will activate an Air Mobility Operations Control Center (AMOCC) on 1 Oct 97. The AMOCC will employ over 70 personnel and mirror the Tanker Airlift Control Center (TACC) at Scott AFB. It will operate twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week to provide directive command and control for theater mobility assets, which includes theater airlift. The commander of the AMOCC will have directive authority to provide immediate guidance in situations when missions deviate from the original schedule. The AMOCC's directive authority will fill the void that currently exists

in the AOSs. However, the AMOCC will not provide command and control for AMC aircraft flying in the European Theater.

Duplication of Command and Control Systems

When the Theater Commanders gained control of the C-130s the Air Force established duplicate command and control systems in each overseas theater, similar to the existing AMC system. According to the AMC/PACAF Command to Command Agreement, "AMC will provide HQ PACAF and PACAF subordinate units access to AMC command and control systems until HQ PACAF can fund and install a permanent theater command and control system" (AMC/PACAF Command to Command Agreement, 1995 B-8).
AMC already maintained a fully-functioning airlift command and control system in the Pacific Theater. PACAF's use of the AMC system until it funds and installs another command and control system suggests that a new PACAF system is a duplication of effort and expense. The situation was the same in the European Theater; AMC already maintained a fully functioning command and control system. With the addition of the AMOCC in the European Theater this duplication will increase as well as the cost of maintaining dual systems.

Maintenance Repair Problems

Approximately half of the C-130 missions in the Pacific Theater are AMC funded and directed missions. The Command to Command agreement between

AMC and PACAF states that when a C-130 has a maintenance problem while flying an AMC mission, AMC will manage and coordinate the repair effort. According to the AMC/PACAF Command to Command Agreement, "HQ AMC/TACC/LOC will: Manage and coordinate maintenance recoveries of C-130 and tanker aircraft within the theater on DBOF-T [Defense Base Operating Fund - Transportation]/AMC missions and coordinate support requirements with the recovery base and monitor/assist the recovery from start to finish" (AMC/PACAF, 1995: F-6). HQ AMC is responsible for managing and coordinating the repairs for C-130 aircraft that have maintenance problems flying AMC missions but it is not held accountable for mission capable rates for theater C-130s. Thus, if a C-130 has a maintenance problem, it does not generate the required attention and visibility needed for prompt service because the Air Force does not hold AMC accountable. AMC has limited resources available to fix aircraft that have maintenance problems "out in the system." When a theater assigned C-130 is competing with an AMC aircraft for those limited resources, the Air Force holds the person who decides which aircraft has priority accountable for the mission capable rate of the AMC aircraft and not the C-130. It is logical to assume that he or she will work to fix the AMC aircraft first. This lack of accountability results in longer maintenance delays for theater assigned C-130 aircraft flying AMC missions than AMC aircraft experience when flying in the overseas theaters. If all airlift aircraft belonged to AMC or the Theater Commander, the Air Force would

hold the person making the decisions accountable for the mission capable rates of all airlift aircraft. Thus, any theater assigned C-130 aircraft, flying an AMC mission, that experiences a maintenance problem would be treated with the same priority as any other airlift aircraft on an AMC mission.

Scheduling Problems

The following is an example of a scheduling difficulty often encountered using the current multiple manager airlift system. If a Pacific Theater Marine unit requests airlift to move equipment that requires 13 pallet positions from Misawa AB, Japan, to Andersen AFB, Guam, PACAF Air Operations Squadron (AOS) would schedule three C-130s to perform this mission. The following table compares the use of three C-130s that have the ability to carry six pallets each to that of one C-141 that is able to carry 13 pallets. The C-130s would require a gas stop enroute, while the C-141 is capable of a direct non-stop flight. The table includes the cost to DoD users per flight hour, flight time required, pallet capability, and number of aircraft required to perform this mission.

Table 1: Cost Comparison Table

Aircraft	Cost/Flt Hr*	Flight Time	Pallets/ Aircraft	acft required	**Total Cost**
C-141	4359	3.5 hours	13	1	**$15,256.50**
C-130	2956	6.5 hours	6	3	**$57,642.00**

* Costs included in this table are FY 95 Special Assignment Airlift Mission (SAAM) rates that HQ AMC charged DoD users.

From this table one can see that it is almost four times more expensive for the Marine Unit to travel using the Pacific Theater C-130s than C-141s. Additionally, the C-130s would perform this mission with five unused pallet positions. The multiple manager airlift system contributes to the unused capacity problem that currently exists in the overseas theaters. PACAF does have the ability to request a C-141 from AMC to perform the above mission. However, in most cases PACAF will view such a request as a lack of ability on its part to perform the mission. This type of scheduling problem exists in both the Pacific and European theaters under the multiple manager airlift system.

Unused Capacity Problems

US airlift aircraft in the overseas theaters have traditionally encountered unused capacity problems. According to a GAO study "Greater Use of Peacetime Airlift Cargo Capacity Would Reduce Costs," "The Air Force's cargo aircraft flying regular overseas missions continue to operate with substantial amounts of unfilled capacity" (GAO, 1992: 1). The multiple manager airlift system has further complicated existing capacity problems in the overseas theaters. In most cases, AMC receives validated airlift requests from USTRANSCOM at Scott AFB. AMC then schedules an AMC aircraft to fly the mission or request a

PACAF or USAFE C-130 to fly the airlift mission. However, using PACAF or USAFE C-130s adds to the paperwork and complexity of the entire operation. Frequently, when time is critical, this required coordination does not occur which results in C-141s or larger aircraft flying missions that C-130s are better suited for. Additionally, PACAF and USAFE have other priorities and do not always make aircraft available for AMC's use.

Potential Overlapping Control

According to Air Force Doctrine Document 30, "It should be noted that new airlift designs, such as the C-17, are bridging the gap between longer range strategic airlift requirements and fully capable theater airlifters" (Air Force Doctrine Document 30, 1995). With new designs like the C-17, the distinction between strategic and theater airlift aircraft continues to diminish. As this distinction fades, the number of theater missions performed by "strategic airlift aircraft" will continue to increase. C-17 direct delivery missions entail flying directly from a base in the US to a forward airstrips within the theater where theater airlift normally operates. Thus, as more AMC aircraft fly theater airlift missions, command and control within the overseas theaters will become increasingly complex and confusing, if controlled from two different agencies. If the separate airlift command and control agencies do not have perfect communication with each other, the potential for conflicts within the theater is high.

To summarize, this section highlighted the current command and control shortfalls in the overseas theaters, maintenance repair problems, scheduling problems, unused capacity problems, and potential overlapping control problems associated with the multiple manager airlift system. Chapter IV recommends some solutions to these problems.

IV. Recommendations

Recommendation Options

In an attempt to find a better, more efficient way to manage airlift, the Air Force separated strategic and theater airlift. This separation has led to inefficient multiple command and control systems. If all airlift aircraft within the theater were controlled by a single commander, the most logical aircraft could be used in each situation, reducing cost for the user and unused capacity. Using the single commander concept the dual command and control systems would be combined, eliminating the inadequacies that exist in the overseas theaters. Combining the command and control centers would eliminate any possible overlapping control problems and make maintenance repairs fair and straightforward. Using a single commander concept, one commander could accomplish the airlift mission as efficiently and effectively as possible. Thus, the recommendation is to create a "single commander" airlift system within the overseas theaters. Whether the AMC Commander or the Theater Commander controls theater airlift is not as important as the consolidation of all theater airlift into one command and control system.

Three options are available to achieve "single commander" command and control for theater airlift: The first option is to consolidate all C-130 aircraft under the Commander of the Air Mobility Command. The second possibility is to

allow the theater commander to control all aircraft that fly in the theater, C-130s and strategic airlift aircraft. The third option is to consolidate the command and control systems in the overseas theaters into one Air Mobility Operations Control Center (AMOCC) that reports to the Theater Commander as well as the AMC Commander.

Option 1

One possibility is to consolidate all airlift under the Commander of the Air Mobility Command. This option would create a single manager for all airlift aircraft similar to the way MAC was organized from 1976 to 1991. AMC would control an AMOCC in each overseas theater and all C-130s would belong to AMC. It would eliminate the gap between strategic and theater airlift, accomplish scheduling airlift more efficiently, and ensure the appropriate aircraft is used in each situation. However, this option does not provide unity of command for the theater commander. This option creates a seam between airlift forces and the theater assigned forces.

Option 2

A second possibility is to allow the theater commander to control all airlift aircraft that fly in the theater. The AMOCC would come under the control of the theater commander and work hand in hand with the TACC at Scott AFB. Tactical control of strategic assets would transfer to the theater commander as each aircraft entered the theater commander's area of responsibility. This option would truly

provide the theater commander with unity of command. It would eliminate the gap that exists between strategic airlift and theater operations. However, a major concern with this option is whether the theater commander has the ability to operate an airlift system in addition to executing the battle plan. This option would dramatically increase the theater commander's workload, while drastically reducing the workload of the AMC Commander.

Option 3

Third, the Air Force could consider controlling all airlift aircraft that fly in the overseas theaters from an AMOCC that reports to the Theater Commander as well as the AMC commander. This AMOCC should be located within the theater. Consolidating the command and control systems of two separate major commands alone would narrow the gap between strategic and theater airlift. Personnel from the overseas theater and from AMC would staff a joint AMOCC. The commander of the AMOCC would be responsible to both the Theater Commander and to the AMC Commander. This option would reduce inefficiencies and redundancies the multiple manager system now experiences. A transfer of TACON to the AMOCC commander would minimize scheduling problems by allowing the AMOCC Commander to utilize the appropriate aircraft, large cargo aircraft or C-130 aircraft, for each situation. Using the appropriate aircraft in each situation will also reduce unused capacity problems. The AMOCC would be responsible for repairs on all aircraft that have maintenance problems within the theater, not just

theater assigned aircraft. Finally, all airlift aircraft that fly within the theater, regardless of missions type, would be controlled from the same location. Thus, all missions operating in the same geographic location would be operating from the same "sheet of music," eliminating potential overlapping control problems.

One drawback associated with this option is that the AMOCC Commander would report to two separate commanders. Reporting to two separate commanders would only cause problems when the two separate commanders have different opinions about how all airlift within the theater should be controlled. In these rare situations, the AMOCC Commander would have to inform both commanders that a difference of opinion exists and allow the commanders to work through their differences. Once again, this situation should be rare and fairly easy to overcome.

Probabilities and Expectations

The probability is low that the first option of a single manager airlift will happen soon. The overseas theaters are currently investing much time and effort to build effective command and control systems. Therefore, the likelihood that the overseas C-130s will return to AMC is small. Conversely, the probability that AMC will transfer tactical control of its assets to the overseas theater commanders for day-to-day missions is also low. AMC has more airlift expertise than the theater commanders and its primary mission is air mobility, not theater warfare. Thus, option two is not likely either. Option 3 has the best chance of occurring. It

provides the easiest and quickest way to streamline overseas airlift command and control with few drawbacks. The probability that the Air Force will select and implement this option is fairly high. As a result, the Air Force will realize large savings and minimize confusion by eliminating redundant command and control systems.

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Vita

Major Donald J. Kochanski was born on 21 June 1963 in St. Louis Missouri. He attended the United States Air Force Academy and graduated with a commission in May 1985.

He subsequently attended Undergraduate Pilot Training at Williams AFB Arizona, earning his pilot wings in July 1986. He remained at Williams AFB to serve as a T-37 instructor pilot, academic instructor, and assistant wing spin pilot.

His next assignment brought him back to the Air Force Academy in Colorado where he served as the Director of Fourth Class Professional Development. During this assignment he flew the UV-18 Twin Otter jump platform as an additional duty.

Major Kochanski was next assigned to Yokota Air Base, Japan, where he served as a C-130 instructor pilot, flight commander, and chief of current operations. In January 1996, he entered the School of Logistics and Acquisition Management, Air Force Institute of Technology as part of the Advanced Study of Air Mobility (ASAM) program. Following ASAM Major Kochanski will be assigned to the Air Force Doctrine Center at Maxwell AFB AL as a Doctrine Analyst.

Permanent Address: 9229 Saddlebrook Dr.
St. Louis, Mo. 63126